

## **ADDRESS OBSTACLES TO MEET HOMELESS AND OTHER SPECIAL UNDERSERVED NEEDS**

The City of Rockford will pursue specific activities during Program Year 2007 to address emergency shelter and transitional housing needs of homeless individuals and families with children, to prevent low-income individuals and families with children from becoming homeless, and to help homeless persons and non-homeless persons (including those with special needs) make the transition to or successfully obtain permanent housing and independent living.

A concerted effort will continue to seek funding for permanent housing with supportive services for those homeless with disabilities and transitional housing. In addition, resources for homeless families and, in particular, teen fathers and unaccompanied youth will also be explored. Community Assistance Program funds have been used to supplement programs in this area and will continue to be considered on a “as needed basis.”

Emergency housing for the homeless will continue to be funded at a maintenance level due to the fact that funding is consistently inadequate in comparison to the need. The only non-competitive funding available to the City specifically for emergency housing is the Emergency Shelter Grants program and the Emergency Community Services homeless program.

Rockford's Emergency Shelter Grant funds have commonly been distributed to local agencies serving the homeless through a competitive grant process. This is expected to continue. The American Red Cross, Shelter Care Ministries, PHASE/WAVE, the Salvation Army, Motherhouse and MELD, are past recipients of the ESG program. More than likely these agencies will continue to be recipients in 2007. They will also be encouraged to apply for the State's Emergency Shelter Grants program and other resources such as Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds and grants through the Illinois Department of Human Services.

Supportive housing projects this year included Promised Land Employment and Shelter Care Ministries. Promised Land Employment is dedicated to the empowerment of economically disadvantaged by assisting them in the procurement of meaningful careers. While a participant in the program, clients will gain the skills necessary to obtain employment, a cornerstone to preventing future homelessness. Promised Land Employment received \$93,083 in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 to provide supportive housing services. In addition, they applied for funding under the 2006 Continuum of Care Application and have not received notification of award as of yet. Shelter Care Ministries was awarded \$116,701 in supportive housing grant funds to continue their work within the community in 2002 and received \$39,866 to renew this project via the 2004 Continuum of Care application. It is our intention to further fund these programs. The American Red Cross received \$466,704 in 2003 to implement and host a physical and mental health program in collaboration with Crusader's Clinic, Janet Wattles and the Carpenter's Place. They applied for and

received renewal funding in 2005. Last, the Carpenter's Place received \$483,928 in 2003 and applied for and received renewal funding in 2005 to provide transitional shelter to homeless persons with addictions. As was expected, all programs did receive renewal funding. However, future funding will depend on the amount of supportive housing grants awarded by HUD.

The City of Rockford and Janet Wattles Center received several Shelter Plus Care grants, which responds to the critical needs of homeless individuals with serious mental illness and homeless individuals with chronic substance abuse problems. The Shelter Plus Care Program was designed to provide safe affordable housing with an array of specialized mental health, substance abuse, health, and rehabilitation services to nearly 120 of the most vulnerable individuals in our community. The nature of the Shelter Plus Care program allows for partial rental assistance, should the client have an income of their own. Due to this guideline, we are able to serve many more homeless than our original application.

Shelter Plus Care will meet its goals through the combined efforts of the City of Rockford, Janet Wattles Center, and the resources of the members of the Mayor's Homeless Task Force. The Task Force, a network of governmental and non-profit agencies, is dedicated to improving the life of the Rockford community's homeless population by sharing information on available resources and reducing duplication of effort. The City has authorized Janet Wattles Center to sponsor the program and to coordinate housing and support services for the components. Other service providers include Singer Mental Health and Development Center (in patient mental health), Crusader Clinic (health and dental), Shelter Care Ministries (social and recreational, Illinois Growth Enterprises (vocation) and Rosecrance Health Network (substance abuse treatment).

In addition to the projects currently in the works, the City will also continue to work to enhance coordination and collaboration on homeless issues by working with the Mayor's (Boone and Winnebago County) Community Task Force on the Homeless. Plan development, strategy, and implementation will be the steps necessary to meet this goal. The Homeless Task Force will meet monthly to discuss local needs and resources and strategy to enhance homeless programs in our community. They will also be attending regional continuum meetings to better coordinate all of our scarce resources.

The City will also provide technical assistance to the homeless providers applying for federal grants or trying to assemble projects, and give consideration to homeless projects through the Community Assistance Program, which is funded with Community Development Block Grant funds. We will also serve as the applicant and administrator of homeless assistance received through HUD's Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance grant with Sponsors contingent on previous year's funding, expiration of grant agreements, needs within the community, and identification and willingness of agencies to take the lead in meeting the identified need.